Islamic Marriage

A Handbook for Young Muslims

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Telephones : 377 3648 / 370 0308 ◆Fax : (91-22) 374 5144.
Email: win@bom4.vsnl.net.in◆ www.winislam.com

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IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (A.S.) SAYS

When a person intends to send a proposal for marriage, he must pray two rakat prayers, praise Allah and recite the following invocation: [1]

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمنِ الرَّحِيْم اَللّٰهُمَّ اِنِّی اُرِيْدُ اَنْ اَتَزَوَّ جَ فَقَدِّرْ لِیْ مِنَ النِّسَّآءِ اَعَفَّهُنَّ فَرْجًا وَّ اَحْفَظَهُنَّ لِیْ فِیْ نَفْسِهَا وَ مَا لِیْ وَ اَوْسَعَهُنَّ لِیْ رِزْقًا وَ اَعْظَمَهُنَّ لِیْ بَرَكَةً فِیْ نَفْسِهَا وَ مَا لِیْ اَنِّیْ اَتْرُكُ فَقَدِّرْ لِیْ مِنْهَا وَ لَدًا طَيِّبًا تَجْعَلَهُ خَلَفًا صَالِحًا فِیْ حَيوتِیْ وَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِیْ.

Transliteration: Bismillah hir Rah'maanir Rah'eem Allaahumma inni oreedo an atazawwaja faqaddirli minannisaa-e-a-'affahunna farjawn wa ah'faz'ahunna li fi nafseha wa maali wa aw sa-a'-hunna li rizqan wa a'-z'amahunna li barakatan fi nafseha wa maali anna atroko faqaddirli minha waladan t'ayyaban taj-a'lahu khalafan s'aaleh'an fi h'ayaati wa ba'da mauti.

Translation: In the name of Allah the Beneficent, the Merciful. O Allah! I intend to marry. Therefore destine for me the most chaste of women and one who would, for my sake, guard herself and my property. Who shall be most auspicious for increase in sustenance and bounties. Then from her womb bestow a pure son who would be my sweet reminiscence in my life and after my death.

[1] *Tahzeebul Islam,* Allamah Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, p. 127

INTRODUCTION

A. Who needs this book?

This book is compiled for those intending to marry in the near future or the newly married people. In this short handbook we have tried to put things in a nutshell. It is recommended to do a detailed reading of other books on Marriage, references of which are given at the end of this book.

B. Why do we need to know the rules?

It is the duty of every Muslim to follow the Islamic laws not only in matters of prayers and fasting but in all his actions. Islam has well defined rules about marriage and sex too. So if you want to follow Islam fully, then you must know the Islamic rules and regulations governing married life. Islam has never repressed the natural feelings of human beings but provides rules which are divine.

This will not only enable you to be faithful to your religion but would also shield you from the barrage of Sex literature that portrays this natural instinct as one that must be left uncontrolled. Western sexual morality permits many things that are prohibited in Islam. The reason for the prohibition of certain actions is

not to act as an infringement of an individual's freedom but because Islam is concerned not only with your physical well being but also your spiritual enhancement. Moreover, we can see the degradation of society where absolute sexual freedom prevails.

C. Main Objective of the book

The commencement of a new life takes place through marriage. If Islamic rules are known and followed, the child born will be chaste.

Insha Allah our progeny can then be capable of being the Imam's (a.s.) followers.

This is the main objective of the book.

<u>Note</u>

Islamic Marriage is of two types; permanent and temporary (Muta'). Since this book was compiled mostly for those entering into a permanent alliance, the topic of Muta' has not been covered.

IMPORTANCE OF MARRIAGE IN ISLAM

The Holy Quran says,

And marry those among you who are single and those who are fit among your male slaves and your female slaves; if they are needy, Allah will make them free from want out of His grace; and Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing.[2]

The above ayat begins with the words ***Wa Ankehoo* (*And marry…)*** The imperative form of the word 'nikah' implies that either it is obligatory or highly recommended.[3] According to scholars, though marriage is a highly recommended act, it becomes obligatory when there is a chance of falling into sin.

The Prophet says, *"No house has been built in Islam more beloved in the sight of Allah than through marriage."* [4]

On another occasion the Prophet (s.a.) said,

"The best people of my nation (Ummat) are those who get married and have chosen their wives, and the worst people of my nation are

[2] Surah Nur 24: 32

[3] *Marriage and Morals in Islam,* Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi

[4] *Wasaelush Shia,* vol. 14, p. 3

those who have kept away from marriage and are passing their lives as bachelors." [5]

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) exhorts, *"Marry, because marriage is the tradition of the Prophet."* The Prophet (s.a.) also said, "*Whosoever likes to follow my tradition, then he should know that marriage is from my tradition."* [6]

A. Importance of sex in marriage

In Islam, marriage is not restricted to a platonic relationship between husband and wife, nor is it solely for procreation. The Islamic term for marriage, *"nikah"* literally means sexual intercourse.[7]

So why has Islam provided extensive rules and regulation regarding sex? This was because Islam has fully understood that sexual instincts cannot and must not be repressed. They can only be regulated for the well being of human beings in this life and for their success in the hereafter.

Sex in married life has been openly recommended in Qur'an, ***'When they [i.e., the wives] have cleansed themselves***

[5] *Mustadrakul Wasael,* Muhaddith Noori, vol. 2, p. 531 quoted in *A Gift for the Youth,* Shabeeb Rizvi

[6] *Wasaelush Shia,* vol. 14, p. 3-4, 6

[7] *Marriage and Morals in Islam,* Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi

[after menstruation], you go into them as Allah has commanded.” [8]

B. Fulfillment of Sexual Urge

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and the Holy Imams (a.s.) also encouraged their followers to marry and to fulfill their sexual urges in lawful ways as can be seen from the following: The Prophet (s.a.) said, *“O you young men! I recommend marriage to you.”* [9]

Imam Reza (a.s.) said, *“Three things are from the traditions of the messengers of God: using perfume, removing the [excessive] hair and visiting one’s wife.”* [10]

C. Celibacy and Monasticism is Forbidden

Islamic is totally opposed to monasticism and celibacy. ‘Uthman bin Maz’un was a close companion of the Prophet. One day his wife came to the Prophet and complained, “O Messenger of God! ‘Uthman fasts during the day and stands for prayers during the night.” In other words, she meant to say that her husband was avoiding sexual relations during the night as well as the day. The Prophet was angered. He did not even wait to put on his slippers. He went to ‘Uthman’s house and found him praying.

[8] Surah Baqarah 2:222
[9] *Wasaelush Shia,* vol. 14, p. 25
[10] *Wasaelush Shia,* Vol. 14, p. 4

When ‘Uthman finished his prayers and turned towards the Prophet, he said, *“O ‘Uthman! Allah did not send me for monasticism, rather He sent me with a simple and straight [Shariah]. I fast, pray and also have intimate relations with my wife. So whosoever likes my tradition, then he should follow it; and marriage is one of my traditions.”* [11]

D. Beneficial Effects of a Married Life

Various studies prove that married people remain healthier, physically and mentally. Islam, has always maintained that marriage is beneficial for us in many ways.

Islam also regards marriage as a way to acquire spiritual perfection.

The Prophet (s.a.) said, *“One who marries, has already guarded half of his religion, therefore he should fear Allah for the other half.”* [12] How true! A person who fulfills his sexual urges lawfully would rarely be distracted in spiritual pursuits.

E. Marriage enhances the value of prayers

The Prophet (s.a.) said, *“Two rak ‘ats (cycles) prayed by a married person are better*

[11] *Wasaelush Shia,* Vol. 14, p. 10
[12] *Wasaelush Shia,* Vol. 14, p. 5

than the night-vigil and the fast of a single person." [13]

A woman came to the Prophet (s.a.) and said that she had tried everything to attract her husband but in vain; he does not leave his meditation to pay any attention to her.

The Prophet (s.a.) told her to inform her husband about the reward of sexual intercourse which he described as follows: *"When a man approaches his wife, he is guarded by two angels and [at that moment in Allah's views] he is like a warrior fighting for the cause of Allah. When he has intercourse with her, his sins fall like the leaves of the tree [in fall season]. When he performs the major ablution, he is cleansed from sins."* [14]

F. Marriage increases Sustenance

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) remarked, *"Give spouses to your single ones, because Allah makes their morality better (improves it) (under the shadow of marriage) and expands their sustenance and increases their generosity (human values)."* [15]

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[13] *Wasaelush Shia,* Vol. 14, p. 7
[14] *Wasaelush Shia,* Vol. 14, p. 74
[15] *Nawadir al Rawandi,* p. 36

WHEN MUST WE MARRY?

The proper time and age of marrying is when the individual reaches sexual as well as mental maturity. Mental maturity may mean the capability of establishing a cordial family life and the ability to fulfill rights of family members.

The need of a spouse and family is a natural and instinctive need which Allah through His Wisdom has placed in human beings and is awakened at its particular time and season, and makes its demand. If it is answered on time and its requirement fulfilled, it traverses its natural course and makes the person perfect. If it is delayed or answered in an incorrect and unnatural mode, it deviates from its natural course, and insurges and rebels, and not only becomes corrupt itself, but also corrupts the man.

Who is eligible to marry?

For man to become eligible for taking a woman's hand in marriage, Islam has several recommendations. According to Islamic laws, when a boy attains the age of fifteen, or becomes sexually potent, he is *baligh*, and has

attained puberty. But this is not enough for entering into a contract of marriage.

Apart from the laws related to puberty, there is a concept of *Rushd*[16] which can be translated as 'capability of a sensible conduct' or maturity. A husband has to be *Rashid* and a wife *Rashidah;* so that the responsibilities of married life are sensibly discharged.

Books of Islamic law may be referred to for exact details on physical and mental maturity.

Recommendation for Early Marriage

Islam highly recommends an early marriage. Even those who feel they would not be able to bear the expenses of family are urged to repose faith in Allah, as He is the Giver of Sustenance *(Rizq),* and go for an early marriage.

[16] *Youth and Spouse Selection,* Ali Akbar Mazaheri, Ansariyan Publication, p. 34

SELECTION OF SPOUSE

Now that we have seen how much importance Islam has accorded to marriage and marital life you would perhaps ask, "How do we select a spouse? What are the guidelines provided by Islam in this regard? Do we look for some particular characteristics or just try to get the best from the worldly point of view?"

Are Pre-Marital contacts Necessary?

Ali Akber Mazaheri writes:

"The notion that a man and a woman must 'know' each other before they decide to marry, so that they may then be able to live happily together is an illusion. Had there been any element of truth and validity in this, the divorce and separation rates in societies which practice it would not have shown a steady rise. Similarly, the marriages which take place without such pre-marital contacts would not have been known to last happily."[17]

The Shariah permits the intended spouses to see each other for the purpose of selection and also permits asking and giving opinions if asked (without it being considered as *gheebat* under certain conditions.)

[17] Youth and Spouse Selection, Ali Akber Mazaheri

We should never resort to deceive the opposite party or conceal a defect during the selection process. Such things can have serious ramifications if exposed after marriage

The school of Ahle-Bait (a.s.) has not left us to follow our whims and fancies. We have been taught the best method of selecting a suitable spouse. The most important criterion is piety or religiousness.

A. Religiousness

The author of *Youth and Spouse Selection* says, "The person who does not have religion, does not have anything."[18]

When a man came to the Prophet (s.a.) to seek guidance for selecting a spouse. He (s.a.w.s.) said, *"It is binding upon you to have a religious spouse."* [19]

Knowing the human weakness for beauty and wealth, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) has forewarned, *"A man who marries a woman for the sake of her wealth, Allah leaves him in his own condition, and one who marries her (only) for her beauty, will find in her (things) which he dislikes (unpleasing manners) and Allah will gather up all these things for one who*

[18] *Youth and Spouse Selection,* Ali Akbar Mazaheri, Ansariyan Publication
[19] *Wasaelush Shia,* Vol. 14, p. 30

marries her for the sake of her faith (religiousness)." [20]

B. Good Nature

The next important criterion is good nature.

Imam Reza (a.s.) wrote in reply to a person who had asked him if it was advisable to marry his daughter to a person known for his ill nature, *"If he is ill-natured (bad tempered), don't marry your daughter to him."* [21]

The same will apply where the bride-to-be lacks a good nature. Such a woman, though she may be beautiful and rich, would make the life of her husband miserable. She can never be patient in the difficulties that arise in married life.

C. Compatibility

The Prophet (s.a.) gave no recognition to class distinction, but in marriage, he stressed upon compatibility. The marrying partners must be *Kufw* of each other, so that there are no unnecessary misgivings later.[22] It is better for a religious woman who is committed to laws and principles to marry a man like herself.

A man questioned the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.s.), "Whom must we marry?"

[20] *Wasaelush Shia,* Vol. 14, p. 31
[21] *Youth and Spouse Selection,* Ali Akbar Mazaheri, p. 151
[22] *Youth and Spouse Selection,* Ali Akbar Mazaheri, p. 34

He replied, *"The suitable (matches)."*

"Who are the suitable matches?"

The Prophet (s.a.) responded, *"Some of the faithfuls are match for others."* [23]

Imam Sadiq (a.s.) said, *"An intelligent and wise woman must not be matched except with a sage and wise man."* [24]

D. Decent Family

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) has given great emphasis on taking into consideration a good family background when we intend to marry.

He said, *"Marry in the lap of a decent family, since the semen and the genes have effect."* [25]

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) also said, *"Look very carefully and minutely as to where you are placing your child because genes and hereditary qualities are transferred in a concealed and unintentional way and have their effect."* [26]

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[23] *Youth and Spouse Selection,* Ali Akbar Mazaheri, p. 175
[24] *Youth and Spouse Selection,* Ali Akbar Mazaheri, p. 178
[25] *Makaremul Akhlaq*
[26] *Youth and Spouse Selection,* Ali Akbar Mazaheri, p. 154

E. Reason

The Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali (a.s.) strongly forbade marrying a foolish and insane person. *"Avoid marrying a stupid woman, since her company is a woe (distress) and her children too get wasted."* [27]

F. Physical and Mental Health

Though religiousness and piety are most important, it does not mean that we totally disregard the physical appearance and beauty of the prospective spouse.

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) says, *"When one intends to marry a woman, he should ask about her hair, just as he asks about her face (beauty), since the hair is one of the two beauties (of women)."* [28]

G. Whom can you Marry?

"Islamic law has placed certain restrictions on the choice of your spouse depending upon blood relationships and religious affiliations." Maulana Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi has summarized these laws in a beautiful way:

(a) Restrictions based on Relationship

There are certain blood relations which are considered *haraam* for you as far as marriage is

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[27] *Wasaelush Shia,* Vol. 14, p. 56
[28] *Beharul Anwaar,* Vol. 103, p. 237

concerned. (As a general rule, anyone who is your *mahram* is forbidden to you for marriage.) The list of such relatives is given in the Qur'an as follows:

For Man: mother, daughter, paternal aunt, maternal aunt, niece, foster-mother, foster-sister, mother-in-law, step-daughter, daughter-in-law, all married women, sister-in-law (as a 2nd wife) (See the Qur'an, ch. 4, verse 23-24)

For Woman: father, son, paternal uncle, maternal uncle, nephew, foster-mother's husband, foster-brother, father-in-law, stepson, son-in-law.

(b) Restrictions based on Religion

A Shi'ah Muslim man can marry: a Shi'ah Muslim woman and a non-Shi'ah Muslim woman. However, if there is danger of being misled, then it is *haraam*.

He can also marry a Jewish or Christian woman in mut'a only. But he cannot marry a woman of any other faith.

A Shi'ah Muslim woman can marry: a Shi'ah Muslim man or a non-Shi'ah Muslim man, although it is better not to do so; and if there is danger of being misled, then it is *haraam*. But she cannot marry a non-Muslim man.[29]

[29] *Marriage and Morals in Islam,* Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi

(c) Cousin Marriages

Though Shariah does not forbid marriage between first cousins, but there are opinions advocating against them mainly due to a probable risk of the offspring inheriting genetic defects/diseases.

THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY

Some relevant points to be noted are:

1. Engagement or *Mangni* does not qualify the future spouses to go out together, even if the parents consent. Man and woman become permissible for each other only after the performance of *Nikah*.

2. Dowry

The unislamic system of demanding and accepting dowry must be avoided at all costs. Shariah does not make any expense incumbent on the bride/bride's parents. Even the marriage expenses, it is recommended are to be borne by the bridegroom.

However, the bride can bring whatever she wants of her free will, and it will always belong to her.

3. Other Unislamic Customs

Many other unislamic customs have crept into the marriage ceremony of some Muslims. These customs are either borrowed from non-Muslim cultures or continue because they are established in past generations. One must avoid them if they are against the Shariah, even if some people are displeased. Other customs like

the breaking of coconut etc. also do not feature among the Islamic rituals. All actions, customs etc. which show disrespect to Islam or weaken the importance of Islam have to be avoided.

4. Haraam Acts

Some of the rituals in marriage ceremonies are absolutely *haraam* like the playing of music. It is also haram for ladies to go for mixed gatherings without proper hijab. Such things invite divine wrath and take away the blessings of this auspicious occasion.

In the Islamic Law, marriage is an '*aqd*, a contract. The components of this contract are as follows:

A. Proposal

In Islam the process of proposal by a man to a woman for her hand in marriage, or for that matter, to her family, is encouraged. Islam considers this natural, and recommends it as an act of respectability and dignity for women.

B. Mahr

And the intending husband is asked to offer a *Mahr* to the bride.

The Quran says, ***And give women their Mahr as a free gift, but if they of themselves be pleased to give up to you a***

portion of it, then eat it with enjoyment and with wholesome result. [30]

The following points are worthy of consideration:

a) *Mahr* must be agreed upon by the marrying partners themselves, not by parents.

b) *Mahr* is her right, to which her husband remains indebted.

c) It is a free gift and not her price.

The *Mahr* may be cash, kind or non-material (like training or teaching something). It can be paid up front or can be in form of promise to pay upon demands decided prior to the solemnization of marriage.[31] Moajjal (immediate), Muwajjal and Indat-talab (on demand).

However, it is much recommended to pay it before or at the time of Nikah itself.

C. The Nikah Ceremony

According to Shariah, the wife-to-be says, ‘An Kah’tu nafsaka a’lal mah’ril ma’loom’

“I have given away myself in *Nikah* to you, on the agreed *Mahr*.”

[30] Surah Nisa 4:4

[31] *Marriage and Morals in Islam,* Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi

Immediately, the man (bridegroom) says, ‘Qabiltun Nikaha’.

“I have accepted the *Nikah*.”

With these pronouncements, they become husband and wife.

If the marrying partners are not able to recite the formula in Arabic, one or two persons or priests[32] are appointed and authorized to officiate. One who represents the bride would first seek her explicit consent to officiate on her behalf, and so would the other who acts on behalf of the groom. Naturally, there would be a slight variation in the pronouncements, because the persons reciting them are appointees. A person who represents the bride would initiate by saying, “Ankah’tu muwakkilati muwakkilaka a’lal mah’ril ma’loom.”

“I give away in *Nikah* the woman who has thus appointed and authorized me, to the man who has authorized you, on an agreed *Mahr*.”

The groom’s representative would respond, “Qabiltunnikaaha limuwakkili a’lal mah’ril ma’loom.”

“I accept the *Nikah* on behalf of the one who has appointed me, on the agreed *Mahr*.”

[32] Aalim, Maulana or those who are conversant with the correct Nikah procedure and proper Arabic pronunciation.

It is *mustahab* to recite a brief discourse or *Khutba* before the *Nikah* formula is enunciated. In this *Khutba*, Allah is praised for His Wisdom in regulating the lawful process of procreation, and then the traditions from the Prophet (s.a.) are also recited.

D. Time of Marriage Ceremony

Though basically marriage is allowed at all times, there are some days on which marriage is not recommended; some of these are based on *ahadith* and some on cultural, historical reasons.

Generally, we can categorize these days into three: (a) There are some *ahadith* which say that it is *makruh* (not recommended) to have a marriage ceremony on the days when the moon is in the constellation of Scorpio (this is known as *al-qamar fil aqrab* or *qamar dar aqrab*), during the last two or three days of the lunar months, and on Wednesdays. (b) There are certain days of the Islamic calendar which have become associated with the early events of the Islamic history; for example, the 10th of Muharram is the day of mourning for the massacre at Karbala or the day of the Prophet's death in Safar, etc. Since such days are commemorated by the Muslims as days of mourning, it is socially and, to some extent, religiously not recommended to have a marriage ceremony on such days.[33]

[33] *Marriage and Morals in Islam,* Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi

The Shia Ithna Ashari (Twelver Shias), especially in India and Pakistan, rarely perform marriage ceremony between the 1st of Muharram and the 8th of Rabi al-Awwal as this period includes the mourning days of Muharram culminating in the martyrdom of Imam Askari (a.s.). The 9th Rabi al-Awwal is celebrated as Eid-e-Zahra.

If there is a need, however, *Nikah,* can be performed at any time.

E. Permission of the Bride-to-be/Father

The girl's consent is necessary and has to be taken by her representative, directly.

In case of a virgin/spinster the father's or the grandfather's permission is also necessary. However if the permission is unreasonably withheld under some conditions or the girl has no father/paternal grandfather it is not necessary.

However, a woman who is not a virgin, does not require any permission in case of remarriage.

F. Valima (Dinner)

Valima is highly recommended on the groom. The relatives, neighbours and friends must be invited for Valima. However, lavish spending is not advisable especially when the

same money can be used effectively by the couple.

THE WEDDING NIGHT

It is highly recommended that the wedding should take place at night. The *hadith* says, *"Take the bride to her new home during the night."* [34]

When the bride enters the room, the groom is recommended to take off her shoes and wash her feet (in a washbowl) and then sprinkle the water around the room.

Then he should perform wuzu and pray two rak'at sunnat prayer and then recite the following *du'a:*

اَللّٰهُمَّ ارْزُقْنِیْ اِلْفَهَا وَ وُدَّهَا وَ رِضَاهَابِیْ وَ اَرْضِنِیْ بِهَا وَ اَجْمَعْ بَیْنَنَا بِاَحْسَنِ اِجْتِمَاعٍ وَ اَنَسِ اِیْتِلاَفٍ فَاِنَّكَ تُحِبُّ الْحَلاَلَ وَ تُكْرِهُ الْحَرَامَ.

Allahummar zuqni ilfahaa wa wuddaha wa riz"aaha bi; warz"ini biha, wa-ajma' baynana bi ah'sane ijtimaa'in wa anasi i-tilafin; fa innaka tuh'ibbul h'alaala wa tukrihul h'araam.

O Allah! Bless me with her affection, love and her acceptance of me; and make me pleased with her, and bring us together in the best form of a union and in absolute harmony;

[34] *Wasaelush Shia,* vol. 14, p. 62

surely You like lawful things and dislike unlawful things.

Then he should ask the bride to do wuzu and pray two rak’at sunnat prayer.

When they are ready to go to bed, the groom should put his hand on the bride’s forehead and pray the following *du’a* while facing the *qiblah*.

اَللّٰهُمَّ بِاَمَانَتِكَ اَخَذْتُهَا وَ بِكَلِمَاتِكَ اِسْتَحْلَلْتُهَا فَاِنْ قَضَيْتَ لِيْ مِنْهَا وَلَدًا فَاجْعَلْهُ مُبَارَكًا تَقِيًّا مِّنْ شِيْعَةِ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَّ لاَ تَجْعَلْ لِلشَّيْطَانِ فِيْهِ شِرْكًا وَّ لاَ نَصِيْبًا.

Allahumma bi amaanatika akhadhtuha wa bi kalimaatika is-tah’laltuha. Fa in qaz”ayta li minha waladan, faj-’alhu mubaarakan taqiyyan min Shi’ati Aal-i Muh’ammad (s’al-lal-laahu a’layhi wa aalihi wa sallam) wa laa taj-’al lish Shayt’aani fihi shirkan wa laa naseeba.

O Allah! I have taken her as Your trust and have made her lawful for myself by Your words. Therefore, if You have decreed for me a child from her, then make him/her blessed and pious from among the followers of the Family of Muhammad [peace be upon him and them]; and do not let Satan have any part in him/her.[35]

Is it necessary to have sexual intercourse on the very first night after the wedding or can it be delayed? As far as the Shariah is concerned, it is neither obligatory nor forbidden to have sex

[35] *Al-’Urwah*. p. 624.

on the first night. It is a private decision between the newly wed couple; it has nothing to do with others.

DAYS AND TIMES FOR SEX

A. When is Sex Forbidden?

Islam has forbidden sexual intercourse during menstruation.

The Qur'an says: ***They ask you about menstruation. Say: "Menstruation is a discomfort (for women). Do not establish sexual relations with them during the menses and do not approach them (sexually) until the blood stops. Then when they have cleansed themselves, you go into them as Allah has commanded you."*** [36]

According to the Shariah, the duration of the monthly period is between three to ten days. If the bleeding was for less than three days, it is not menstruation; if it is for more than ten days, then it is menstruation for the regular number of days and istehadha for the rest of the bleeding during which sex is permitted.

The prohibition of sex during the periods is limited strictly to sexual intercourse; other intimate contact (with the exception of the vagina and anus) is allowed. However, it is

[36] Surah Baqarah 2:222

better not to play with her body between the navel and the knees.

If a person who is engaged in sexual intercourse with his wife discovers that her period has begun, then he should immediately withdraw from her.

It is clear from the verse mentioned above *(until the blood stops)* that once the blood has stopped, intercourse becomes lawful even if the woman has not performed the major ritual ablution *(ghusl).* But mujtahids say that it is better to refrain from intercourse till she performs the *ghusl* or, at least, washes her private parts.[37]

Sexual intercourse is also not allowed during the post-natal bleeding called nifas (maximum 10 days), during daytime in the month of *Ramadhan*, and when a person is in *ihram* during the pilgrimage to Mecca. At all other times, sexual intercourse is allowed.

Times when Sexual Intercourse is *makruh:*

i. During frightful natural occurrences, e.g., eclipse, hurricane, earthquake;

ii. From sunset till *maghrib;*

ii. From dawn till sunrise;

iii. The last three nights of lunar months;

[37] *Wasaelush Shia,* vol. 1, p. 576

iv. Eve of the 15th of every lunar month;

v. Eve of 10th *Zil-hijjah;*

vii. After becoming *junub*.

B. Recommended Days and Times for Sex

We have certain *ahadith* which say that it is better to have sexual intercourse at these times:

i. Sunday night;

ii. Monday night;

iii. Wednesday night;

iv. Thursday noon;

v. Thursday night;

vi. Friday evening;

vii. Whenever the wife wants to have sex.

C. When is it Obligatory to have Sex?

It is wajib on man to have sex with his wife at least once in every four months; this is considered as one of the conjugal rights of the wife. This obligation stays in force unless there is a valid excuse or the wife waives her right.

SEXUAL TECHNIQUES

There are no particular rules and laws either in foreplay or in intercourse. The only laws and rules are the ones reached by the lovers by mutual and often unspoken understanding. Whatever is pleasing and satisfying to both the husband and the wife is right and proper; and whatever is mutually displeasing is wrong. The only limitation to this general rule would be any Shariah rule which goes against the wishes of the husband or the wife.

A. Foreplay is Highly Recommended

Islam emphasizes on foreplay. Imam ‘Ali says, *“When you intend to have sex with your wife, do not rush because the woman (also) has needs (which should be fulfilled).”* [38]

Sex without foreplay has been equated to cruelty. The Prophet said, *“Three people are cruel: …a person who has sex with his wife before foreplay.”* [39]

Another *hadith* equates sex without foreplay to animal behavior: *“When anyone of you has sex with his wife, then he should not go to her*

[38] *Wasaelush Shia,* vol. 14, p. 40
[39] *Wasaelush Shia,* vol. 14, p. 40

like birds; instead he should be slow and delaying." [40]

As for the role of a woman in sexual foreplay, the Imams have praised a wife who discards shyness when she is with her husband. Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) says, *"The best woman among you is the one who discards the armor of shyness when she undresses for her husband, and puts on the armor of shyness when she dresses up again."* [41] After all, modesty and chastity in public is the hallmark of a Muslim lady.

These sayings clearly show that the husband and the wife should feel completely free when they are engaged in mutual stimulation which is known as foreplay. There is nothing wrong, according to Islam, for a woman to be active and responsive during sex. As for the Islamic Shariah, all the mujtahids are unanimous in saying that the act of sexual foreplay in itself is *mustahab* (recommended). Likewise, it is recommended not to rush into sexual intercourse.[42] The operative word is mutual pleasure and satisfaction.

B. Techniques of Foreplay

As far as the methods of mutual stimulation in foreplay are concerned, the Shariah allows

[40] *Wasaelush Shia,* vol. 14, p. 82
[41] *Wasaelush Shia,* vol. 14, p. 14-15
[42] *Al-'Urwah,* p. 625

the husband and the wife to see, kiss, touch, smell and stimulate any part of each other's body. Therefore, oral sex, as it is known, is allowed. Imam Musa al-Kazim (a.s.) was once asked, "Can a person kiss his wife's vagina?" The Imam said, *"No problem."* [43]

The only restriction is that no foreign object should be used. The restriction on the use of foreign objects is based on the following *hadith*. 'Ubaydullah bin Zurarah says that he had an old neighbour who owned a young slave-girl. Because of his old age, he could not fully satisfy the young slave-girl during sexual intercourse. She would therefore ask him to place his fingers in her vagina as she liked it. The old man complied with her wishes even though he did not like this idea. So he requested 'Ubaydullah to ask Imam 'Ali ar-Reza (a.s.) about it. When 'Ubaydullah asked the Imam about it, the Imam said, *"There is no problem as long as he uses any part of his own body upon her, but he should not use anything other than his body on her."* [44]

Though masturbation (i.e., self-stimulation of one's own sexual organ till emission of semen or orgasm) is not allowed, in the case of married persons, there is no problem if the wife stimulates her husband's penis till the emission of semen or the husband stimulates his wife's

[43] *Wasaelush Shia,* vol. 14, p. 77
[44] *Wasaelush Shia,* vol. 14, p. 77

vagina till orgasm. This is allowed because it does not come under "self-stimulation;" it is stimulation by a lawful partner.

C. Sexual Intercourse

Is there any particular position for sexual intercourse which is forbidden in Islam? No! As far as the basic coital positions are concerned, there are no restrictions. The term 'basic coital positions' denotes the positions known as the man above, face to face, woman above face to face; side position, face to face; rear-entry position in which the husband penetrates the vagina from the rear. Actually, the Shariah has left it on the husband and the wife to explore and experiment as they wish.

However, it is *makruh* to adopt a standing position, or to face the qiblah or keep it on the backside during the intercourse. It is advisable to refrain from the acrobatic positions given by some sexologists of the East and the West which might even cause physical harm. Remember, the basic rule is mutual pleasure and flexibility. If one partner does not like a particular position, then the other should yield to his or her feelings.

It is highly emphasized that at the commencement of intercourse the partners should recite *Bismillaahir Rah'maanir Rah'eem* (In the name of Allah the Beneficent, the Merciful).

D. Anal Intercourse

The opinions of our mujtahids vary on the permissibility of anal intercourse. The majority of the Shi'ah mujtahids have derived two conclusions: (1) that anal intercourse is not *haraam* but strongly disliked (*karahatan shadidah*) provided the wife agrees to it. (2) and if she does not agree to it, then all mujtahids say that it is precautionarily wajib to refrain from it.

However, during the last decade of his life, Ayatullah al-Khu'i departed from the majority view and gave the ruling that it was precautionarily wajib to abstain from anal intercourse no matter whether the wife agrees to it or not.[45]

Maulana Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi says, "I would strongly advise against anal intercourse," and quotes the saying of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq and Imam 'Ali ar-Reza (a.s.) about anal intercourse: "*Woman is a means of your pleasure, therefore do not harm her.*" [46]

E. Hygiene

After the intercourse the partners may first wipe their genitals with clean pieces of cloth. It

[45] al-Khu'i, *Minhaju 's-Salihiyn,* vol. 1 (Beirut: 22nd edition) p. 64

[46] *Wasaelush Shia,* vol. 14, p. 101-102

is recommended that the same cloth/towel must not be used by both of them.

DUA FOR PREGNANCY

Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) has taught the following dua:

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

اَللّهُمَّ لاَ تَذَرْنِي فَرْدًا وَّ اَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْوَارِثِيْنَ وَحِيْدًا وَّ وَحْشِيًّا فَيَقْصُرُ عَنْ تَفَكُّرِيْ بَلْ هَبْ لِيْ عَافِيَةَ صِدْقٍ ذُكُرًا وَّ اُنَاثًا اَنَسُ بِهِمْ مِنَ الْوَحْشَةِ وَ اَسْكُنُ اِلَيْهِمْ مِنَ الْوَحْدَةِ وَ اَشْكُرُكَ عِنْدَ تَمَامِ نِّعْمَةٍ يَا وَهَّابُ يَا عَظِيْمُ يَا مُعَظَّمُ ثُمَّ اَعْطِنِيْ فِيْ كُلِّ عَاقِبَةٍ شُكْرًا حَتّى تَبْلُغَنِيْ مِنْهَا رِضْوَانُكَ فِيْ صِدْقِ الْحَدِيْثِ وَ اَدَاءِ الْاَمَانَةِ وَ وَفَاءٍ بِالْعَهْدِ

Transliteration:

Allaahumma laa tadharni fardanw wa anta khairul waaretheen wah’eedanw wah’sheeyan fayaqs’uroo a’n tafakkori bal habli a’afiyata s’idqin dhokooranw wa onaathan aanaso behim minal wah’shate wa askuno ilaihim minal wah’date wa ashkoroka I’nda tamaame ne’matin yaa wahhaabo yaa a’zeemo yaa mo-a’z’z’amo thumma a’at’eni fee kulle a’afiyatin shukran h’atta tabloghani minha riz”waanoka

fee s'idqil h'adeethe adaaail amaanate wa waqaaain bil 'ahde

Translation: O Allah! Do not keep me solitary though You are the best of Inheritors. I am alone and terrified of loneliness. This worry has reduced my thankfulness to You. So bestow on me true forgiveness and give me female and male children so that by their company I can cure my terror of loneliness. By which my loneliness is cured. So that on the completion of this bounty I can thank You. O the greatest Giver, O the Greatest, O the Bestower of greatness, after this bestow me with tawfeeq that I thank You for every kindness. Till I can achieve Your kindness by thankfulness, by speaking the truth, by returning trusts and by fulfilling oaths.[47]

[47] *Tahzeebul Islam,* p.147

CONTRACEPTIVES AND ABORTION

According to the Shi'ah *fiqh*, family planning as a private measure to space or regulate the family size for health or economic reasons is permissible. Neither is there any Qur'anic verse or *hadith* against birth control, nor is it wajib to have children in marriage.

A. THE CONTRACEPTIVE METHODS

Let us examine some of the most commonly used contraceptive methods and determine whether they are permissible in Islam or not. It must be mentioned that we are studying the permissibility of these methods from the Shariah point of view only. For the medical opinion about the reliability or any side-effects of these methods, the reader must consult his or her physician. Further each individual needs to check additional conditions which may apply as per his Marja'a.

1. Oral Contraceptives

Birth control pills prevent conception by inhibiting ovulation. Since all such pills inhibit ovulation, there is absolutely no problem in using them. However, the individual must

consult the physician about possible side-effects.

The pills like the 'morning-after' and RU486 may be taken after the intercourse BUT not after feeling or knowing that pregnancy has already occurred.

2. Depo-Provera

Depo-Provera works exactly like the pills, but instead of taking it orally it is injected once every three months. This and other similar contraceptive methods by injection are also permissible.

3. Intrauterine Devices (IUD)

IUDs are plastic or metal objects, in a variety of shapes, that are implanted inside the uterus. Since the *shari'* pregnancy begins at implantation, there is no problem in using IUD as a birth control device.

4. Barrier Devices

All barrier devices prevent the sperm from entering the uterus. This is done by sheathing the penis with a condom, or by covering the cervix with a diaphragm, cervical cap, or vaginal sponge. The use of spermicidal substances which kill the sperm before reaching the ovum is also a barrier device. There is absolutely no problem in using these contraceptives either.

5. Abstinence During Fertile Period

There are three basic procedures to predict ovulation so that sexual intercourse can be avoided during the approximately six days of a woman's most fertile monthly phase. These three methods are as follows:

(a) Ovulation Method: A woman learns to recognize the fertile time by checking the difference in the constitution of the cervical mucus discharge. The cervical mucus discharge signals the highly fertile period; and thus avoiding sex during the fertile days prevents pregnancy.

(b) Rhythm Method: A method similar to the first, but it depends on observing the monthly cycles for a whole year to determine the fertile days.

(c) Temperature: In this method, besides keeping a calendar record of her cycle, a woman also takes her temperature daily to detect ovulation. She can know her ovulation whenever her basal body temperature increases.

6. Withdrawal (Coitus Interruptus)

Coitus interruptus means withdrawing the penis just before ejaculation. This was the most common method of birth control before the invention of modern devices. Muhammad bin Muslim and 'Abdur Rahman bin Abi 'Abdillah Maymun asked Imam Ja'far as-

Sadiq (a.s.) about withdrawal. The Imam said, *"It is up to the man; he may spill it wherever he wants."* [48]

Based on this *hadith*, the majority of our mujtahids believe that coitus interruptus is allowed but *makruh* without the wife's consent.[49]

All methods mentioned above do not involve surgical operation and they are also reversible. A woman (or man) using these methods can stop using them at anytime in order to have a child.

7. Sterilization

Sterilization involves surgical operation.

Sterilization in men, known as vasectomy, means the severing or blocking of the tube in the male reproductive tract. This tube or duct passes sperm from the testes to the prostate and other reproductive organs.

Sterilization in women, known as tubal ligation, involves the blocking or severing of the fallopian tubes which transport the ovum.

The permissibility of sterilization depends on whether or not it is reversible.

[48] *Wasaelush Shia,* vol. 14, p. 105
[49] *Sharh Lum'a,* vol. 2, p. 28; *al-'Urwah,* p. 628; *Minhaj,* vol. 2, p. 267

8. A Woman can Practice Birth Control

The wife has full right to the use of contraceptives even without the approval of her husband.[50] However, she should not use a method which may come in the way of her husband's conjugal rights. For example, she cannot force him to use condom or practice coitus interruptus. This rule is based upon the principle that the extent of the husband's conjugal rights over his wife is just that she should be sexually available, responsive, and cooperative. This right does not extend to that of bearing children for him. Bearing children or not is a personal decision of the woman; and therefore, she may use contraceptives provided they do not come in the way of her husband's conjugal rights.

B. ABORTION

Islam's approach to the issue of birth control and abortion is very balanced. It allows women to prevent pregnancy but forbids them to terminate it. Abortion after the implantation of the fertilized ovum in the womb is absolutely forbidden and is considered a crime against the law of God, and the fetus.

[50] *Minhaj,* vol. 2, p. 276

THE MAJOR ABLUTION (GHUSL JANABAT)

A. INTRODUCTION

"Janabat" is a ritual impurity caused by the discharge of semen or by sexual intercourse; and the person on whom *ghusl janabat* becomes wajib is known as *"junub".* The Qur'an says:

O you who believe! Do not go near prayers (salat) when you are... junub until you have washed yourselves.[51] O you who believe! When you stand up for prayers (salat), . . . if you are junub, then purify (yourselves).[52]

B. THE CAUSES OF *GHUSL JANABAT*

There are two causes of *janabat:*

1. **Discharge of semen.** It does not make any difference whether this discharge is while awake or in a wet-dream, slight or profuse, intentionally or otherwise, in lawful way or unlawful (e.g., masturbation). In all these cases *ghusl janabat* becomes obligatory *(wajib).*
If a liquid comes out from a man and he

[51] Surah Nisa 4:43
[52] Surah Maidah 5:6

does not know whether or not it is semen, then he should look for the following three signs: (1) emission with passion; (2) spurting discharge; (3) feeling relaxed after the discharge. If these signs are found together on him, then he should consider the liquid as semen, otherwise not.

If a secretion is discharged from a woman, then it is precautionary wajib for her to do ghusl janabat provided it came with sexual passion *and* she felt relaxed after it. But if the secretion comes without the sexual passion or without the feeling of relaxation after the discharge, then it is not najis and therefore ghusl is not wajib upon her.

2. **Sexual Intercourse.** It does not make any difference whether the intercourse was lawful or unlawful, and with or without discharge of semen. In Islamic laws, sexual intercourse is defined as the penetration of the glans into the vagina or anus of the woman. That is, for *ghusl janabat* to become wajib it is not necessary that full penetration or discharge of semen should take place. In case of sexual intercourse, *ghusl janabat* becomes wajib on both the man and the woman.

C. THINGS FORBIDDEN FOR A JUNUB

The following four acts are *haraam* for the junub before performing the ghusl.

1. *Touching the writing of the Qur'an,* the names and attributes of Allah, the names of the Prophet, the Imams and Fatimah (the daughter of the Prophet).

2. *Reciting the verses of the Qur'an in which sajdah (prostration) is wajib.* These verses are: verse 15 of chapter 32; verse 15 of chapter 41; verse 62 of chapter 53; and verse 19 of chapter 96. It is better not to recite even a single verse from these chapters.

3. *Entering or staying in the mosque.* The Qur'an says, ***"O you who believe!...Nor (are you allowed to enter the masjid) if you are junub until you have washed yourself except passing through."*** [53] Based on this verse and relevant *ahadith,* the mujtahids have concluded that a junub is totally forbidden from staying in the mosque.

Of course, as the verse says, one can pass through the mosques (by entering from one door and leaving from the other). However, this exception of passing through does not apply to the following places: the Masjidu'l-Haraam (the Sacred Mosque at Mecca) Masjidu' n-Nabi (the Mosque of the Prophet at Medina), and shrines of the Imams. A junub cannot even pass through them.

4. *Leaving something in or taking it out from a mosque.*

[53] Surah Nisa 4:43

D. THINGS *MAKRUH* (DISLIKED) FOR THE JUNUB

1. Eating and drinking is *makruh* for a junub except after doing wuzu or gargling or rinsing the nose.

2. Reciting more than seven verses from the Qur'an. This applies to other than the four chapters with wajib sajdah mentioned above.

3. Touching the cover of the Qur'an.

4. Sleeping without doing wuzu.

E. THE ACTS WHOSE VALIDITY DEPEND ON *GHUSL JANABAT*

1. Salat (prayers) except *salatu'l-mayyit* (the prayer for a dead Muslim) which can be performed even in the state of janabat.

2. *Wajib tawaf* (the circumambulation of the Ka'bah in hajj).

3. Fasting. If someone knowingly remains junub until dawn in Ramadan, his fasting will become invalid *(batil).*

F. MANNER OF PERFORMING GHUSL

Ghusl is a ritual bath; it involves washing of the whole body. There are two methods of performing ghusl. One is known as *ghusl tartibi,* and the other is known as *ghusl irtimasi.*

1. Ghusl Tartibi:

"Ghusl tartibi" means an ordinal bath, performed in three stages.

After washing away the najasat (e.g., semen or blood) from the body and after *niyyat*, the body has to be washed in three stages: First, head down to the neck; then the right side of the body from the shoulder down to the foot; and lastly, the left side of the body. Each part should be washed thoroughly in such a way that the water reaches the skin. Special care should be taken while washing the head; the hair should be combed (e.g., with your fingers) so that water reaches the hair-roots. While washing the right side of the body, some part of the left side must be washed too, and also, while washing the left side of the body, some part of the right side must be washed.

2. Ghusl Irtimasi:

"Ghusl irtimasi" means a bath involving immersion of the whole body in the water. It is needless to say that such a ghusl can only be done in a body of water, e.g., a pool, river, lake or sea.

After washing away the semen or blood from the body and after *niyyat*, the whole body should be completely immersed in the water all at once, not gradually. One has to make sure that the water reaches all parts of the body,

including hair and the skin under it. However, *ghusl tartibi* is preferred to *ghusl irtimasi.*

G. RECOMMENDABLE ACTS OF *GHUSL*

These recommendable acts are five:

1. Washing both hands upto the elbows three times before the ghusl.

2. Gargling three times.

3. Wiping the hands on the whole body to ensure that every part has been thoroughly washed.

4. Combing the hair with the fingers to ensure that the water reaches the hair-roots.

5. (For men only) Doing *istibra'* before *ghusl janabat. Istibra',* in the present context, means "urinating." The benefit of *istibra':* If a liquid comes out of one's penis after completing the ghusl, and he doubts whether it is semen or urine, then should he repeat the ghusl or not? If he had done *istibra'* before the ghusl, then he can assume that the liquid is urine he will not have to repeat the ghusl; he just has to do wuzu for his salat. But, on the other hand, if he had not done *istibra'* before the ghusl, then he has to assume that it is the remnant of semen and he will have to do the ghusl again.

MUTUAL RIGHTS AND BEHAVIOUR

Remember that the bride has just left her loved ones. She might be new to this place. So she deserves consideration and a chance to adjust herself in the new environment.

Mulla Mohsin Faiz Kashani in his book, *Al Waafi* in the chapter of "A Woman's right over her Husband" writes that it is narrated from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) that some people inquired from him regarding the rights of a wife over her husband. He (s.a.w.s.) answered, *"He should overlook her minor faults and if she commits a major mistake then he should forgive her."* [54]

Shahab Abdo Rabbeh relates that I asked Imam Sadiq (a.s.) concerning the rights of a woman over her husband. He (a.s.) answered, *"He should fulfill all her basic necessities and must not terrorise her by getting angry time and again. i.e. after fulfilling her needs, is kind and affectionate towards her, then I swear by Allah, he has fulfilled his wife's rights."* [55]

The importance of observing the rights of a wife can be gauged from the hadith of the

[54] *A Gift for the Youth,* Shabeeb Rizvi
[55] *Al Kafi,* Quoted in *A Gift for the Youth,* Shabeeb Rizvi

Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) wherein he says, *"The best among you is the one who observes the rights of his wife in the best possible way and I am the best among you to observe the rights of my wives."* [56]

A. The Importance of Helping one's wife at home

One day the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) paid a visit to the house of Ali and Fatemah (a.s.). He saw that Ali (a.s.) was sieving the pulses and Fatemah (s.a.) was busy cooking. On observing this the Prophet (s.a.) remarked, *"O Ali, I do not speak except what is revealed to me. Anyone who helps his wife in her domestic affairs obtains a reward of one year of worship equal to the amount of hair on his body. This year of worship will be as if he has fasted during its days and prayed during its nights. Allah will reward him equal to the reward of all the patient ones, Hazrat Dawood (a.s.) and Hazrat Isa (a.s.)."* [57]

B. Consequence of Ill Behaviour with the Family

Imam Reza (a.s.) says, *"Every man should strive to make his wife and children comfortable according to his capacity for if he is strict and*

[56] *Man La Yahzarul Faqih,* Quoted in *A Gift for the Youth,* Shabeeb Rizvi
[57] *Jamius Sa'daat,* vol. 2, p. 142

unkind to them and because their rights are being deprived they will desire his death." [58]

When Saad ibne Maaz, the great companion of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) expired, he (s.a.w.s.) himself participated in the funeral procession and shouldered his bier quite a few times with considerable respect. Then he laid it in the grave and buried him with his own hands. On seeing the zeal of the Prophet (s.a.), the mother of Saad cried, "Congratulations, O my son on gaining paradise." On hearing this the Messenger of Islam retorted, *"Wait, do not make haste in divine affairs. Your son is in great agony and anguish at the moment."* When the people inquired about the reason for this condition he (s.a.), replied, *"He behaved very badly with his family members."* [59]

C. Rights of the Wife According to Imam Sajjad (a.s.)

"It is the right of your wife that you should know that Allah has made her for you a tranquility and comfort (in worry), and a friend and shield (against sins).

And likewise, it is incumbent upon both of you to thank Allah for your partner and to know that (the spouse) is a grace of Allah upon you. And it is obligatory to have good fellowship with

[58] *Wasaelush Shia,* Shaykh Hurre Amili
[59] *A Gift for the Youth,* Shabeeb Rizvi

this grace of Allah (i.e. wife), and to respect her and be kind to her, although your rights upon her are greater and her obedience to you is final in all your likes and dislikes so long as it is not a sin. So she has the right of love and fellowship, and a place of repose (i.e. house) so that natural desires may be fulfilled, and this in itself is a great duty. And there is no strength but by Allah." [60]

D. Husband's rights over his Wife

The rights of a husband over his wife are numerous. The most important among them is related to having physical relationship with her. The duty of a wife is to submit herself physically before her husband. This right of the husband i.e. of having a physical relationship with his wife, as and when he wants, is obviously a reciprocation of her feelings. In absence of her husband the duties of the wife include the protection of his rights, status, wealth and respect. She must not spend his wealth without his permission nor must she reveal his secrets. Rather she should be his closest confidante.

She must not let anybody inside the house without his permission in his absence. For, doing so would lead to a lot of misunderstandings which would have drastic repercussions on the sacred contract of marriage. She must value his

[60] *The Charter of Rights of Imam Zaynul Abidin,* translated by Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi

ideas, plans and provisions that he has prepared for her and other family members and obey him under all circumstances. She must not disobey him come what may nor must she do any such thing which detracts him. Rather she must try her best to attract his attention towards herself by which both of them can lead a life of harmony.[61]

Imam Baqir (a.s.) says that once a lady inquired from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) regarding the rights a husband enjoys over his wife. He (s.a.w.s.) said,

"First and foremost is that she should obey him and refrain from disobedience. She must not donate anything from his house without his permission nor can she keep recommended fasts without his approval. She must NEVER deny him his physical rights nor deprive him of its pleasures. If she steps out of the house without his permission, the angels of the heaven and the earth, of wrath and mercy, curse her till she returns to her house." [62]

E. The Importance of obeying one's Husband

Imam Sadiq (a.s.) says that a group of people paid a visit to the Messenger of Islam and said, "O Prophet of Allah, we have seen

[61] *A Gift for the Youth,* Shabeeb Rizvi
[62] *Makaremul Akhlaq,* Quoted in *A Gift for the Youth,* Shabeeb Rizvi

such people who prostrate before each other." The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) answered, *"If at all I could permit prostration before anyone except Allah, the Creator, I would have ordered the wives to prostrate before their husbands."* [63]

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) is also reported to have said, *"A wife who gives her husband water to drink attains a reward of one year of worship, a year whose nights were passed in prayers and days in fasting. In exchange of one drop of water which she provides for her husband one city is built in paradise for her and sins of sixty years are forgiven."*

The author of *Makaremul Akhlaq* narrates on the authority of Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.), *"The Jehaad of women is to be patient while facing the difficulties of life with their husbands."*

F. Stricture Against Foul Language

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) said, *"Any woman who converses indignantly with her husband, thereby hurting his sentiments, none of her deeds either obligatory or recommended will be accepted from her until and unless her husband does not express his satisfaction with her. Even if this woman fasts during the days, prays during the nights, frees slaves or donates the best of horses in the way of Allah, she will*

[63] *Makaremul Akhlaq,* Op. cit.

be first to enter the fire of hell. Similar will be the fate of the husband who usurps the rights of his wife." [64]

G. A Summary of Mutual Rights

In his book *Principles of Marriage and Family Ethics,* Professor Ibrahim Amini has explained in much detail the duties of husband and wives, often quoting incidents to emphasise his arguments.

Part One deals with the duties of Women: According to the author the purpose of marriage is that the wife lives with her husband. She must be kind and should respect her husband. She must not complain unnecessarily. She must have a pleasant disposition. She must be a comfort for her husband and appreciate him. She must not look for his shortcomings. She must observe Islamic Hijab. She must forgive her husband's mistakes. She must learn to cope with her husband's relatives. She must help her husband to make progress. She must not be unduly suspicious.

Part Two deals with the duties of Men: The man is the guardian of the family. He should take care of his wife and be loving towards her. He must respect her and be well-mannered. He also must not complain unnecessarily. He should overlook her mistakes. He should not be

[64] *Makaremul Akhlaq*

suspicious about her. He should be clean at home also. He must help in the household chores and assist in bringing up children.

Duties of Other Family Members

Other household members should also know that the time and attention of the newly married ones will be divided and previous expectations may have to be changed to suit new circumstances. In joint families, the *namehram* ladies must observe *hijab* if they are not living in a separate house with their husbands.

Decency and Privacy

The Prophet and the Imams have emphasized that when you engage in sexual intercourse, make sure that no child (or, for that matter, any other person) sees you or hears you. Abu Basir quotes Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) as follows, *"Be careful not to have sex with your wife while a child can see you. The Prophet used to dislike this (attitude) very strongly."* [65] If a child sees and hears the parents engaged in sexual intercourse, he might go through a shocking psychological experience. It might also create a problem in his own adult life. Islam has laid down clear guidelines about the privacy of adults.

Qur'an gives us the following rules about privacy within the family circles:

[65] *Wasaelush Shia,* vol. 14, p. 94-95

1. There are three times in a day: night, early morning and afternoon which are considered as times of privacy.

2. The minor children should be taught that during times of privacy they are not allowed to enter the bedroom of their parents or adults without first asking their permission.

3. At other times, the children are free to come and go into the bedroom of their parents without asking for their permission. In retrospect, this means that the parents should be decently dressed at those other times.

4. As for the mature children and adults, the Qur'an is clear that they may enter the bedroom of their parents or other adults at all times only after asking their permission.

Conclusion

The Islamic way of life not only assures happiness and satisfaction of an individual but the society as a whole benefits by implementing the laws of Shariah. Since the society consists of families and families come into being by matrimonial relationships it is necessary that this basic unit of society is properly understood and protected from all that threatens its existence.

GLOSSARY OF ISLAMIC TERMS

HARAAM: forbidden, prohibited.
IHTIYAT WAJIB: precautionarily wajib.
JA'IZ, HALAAL, MUBAH: permitted, allowed, lawful, legal.
MARJA' (pl. MARAJI'): A high-ranking mujtahid.
MAKRUH: reprehensible, disliked, discouraged.
MUJTAHID: or FAQIH (pl. FUQAHA): a jurist.
SUNNAT or MUSTAHAB: recommended, desirable, better.
WAJIB: obligatory, necessary, incumbent.

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ENDNOTE

I have referred to Ali Akber Mazaheri's *Youth and Spouse Selection* for Chapters of *Importance of Marriage in Islam* and *Spouse Selection*. Chapters Four to Eight and Chapter Eleven, are wholly taken from Maulana Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi's *Marriage and Morals in Islam,* which I think is the best book on this subject. The Chapter of *Ghusl Janabat* is adapted from the book, *Ritual and Spiritual Purity* also by Maulana Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi. For Chapter of *Mutual Rights* I have referred to the following books: *Youth and Spouse Selection by* Ali Akber Mazaheri, *Principles of Marriage and Family Ethics* by Ibrahim Amini and *A Gift for the Youth* by Shabeeb Rizvi.